

Motivational momentum

How to inspire employees after the honeymoon **Interviewed by Paul R. Harvey**

The euphoria and promise of a new employee's first few weeks can be difficult to maintain. Recent studies have shown that, over time, nearly 70 percent of employees become disengaged with their organizations.

These numbers suggest a gap in leadership's ability to build on the initial energy of a new hire. Workers always hit the ground running, but without a mix of motivation, inspiration and a clear vision of the big picture, they soon run out of steam. So how do the best leaders maintain motivational momentum?

"Every day, our employees leave us clues or triggers about what motivates them," says Mark Paskowitz, senior consulting partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies® in Escondido. "We need to be aware of what they are."

Smart Business recently spoke with Paskowitz about the perils of a one-size-fits-all motivational strategy and why the best leaders know how their followers are feeling when they come to work on Monday morning.

How can a motivational strategy backfire?

I remember early in my career as a new supervisor wanting to acknowledge one of my peak performers for a job well done. Since I was extroverted in my personality and communication style, I assumed that my employee would like to be acknowledged in front of 50 of her peers. Immediately after the public celebration, she pulled me aside and said, 'Never do that again.' She was an introvert and didn't like public celebrations. As a new supervisor, it was an early wake-up call, which taught me one size doesn't fit all. What motivates one person may not motivate another.

What practical tools and insights can managers apply immediately?

It starts when employees first join your organization. How do you maintain their initial excitement about joining the company? Their immediate manager can make all the difference in the world. I remember, before payroll automation, a manager who would leave positive comments regarding my performance attached to my paychecks. It was



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a small and simple thing, and yet, it was very powerful. People want four to five positive strokes to one redirect/reprimand. Redirection should be focused around keeping the energy positive and delivered while not punishing someone who is still learning. You learn a lot about organizational culture and leadership when people make mistakes. It is human nature to largely focus on people making mistakes instead of when they do a great job. Praise is one of the most underutilized skills that managers can always do more of.

What are some different forms of motivation?

Intrinsic motivation focuses on activities an employee enjoys doing that bring them meaning, fulfillment and enjoyment. The key is being able to tie the intrinsic needs of the person with critical performance indicators. Can this worker find fulfillment with what he or she is doing while providing value and high performance for the organization? The critical question to ask as leaders is how do our employees feel when they come to work on Monday morning?

Extrinsic motivation focuses on external rewards or outcomes an employee receives

for doing a job well. Whether it's a promotion or earning a well-deserved raise, the key is to build the person's confidence and competence so he or she performs well on a day-to-day basis. The focus should remain on what we can do to help our employees achieve success.

What motivational methods are best from an organizational perspective?

One of the big motivational factors for organizations is having individuals understand how what they do is tied to something bigger or how what they do ties to the business strategy and organizational purpose. You must ask yourself, 'Do people rally around the vision of our organization?'

Another best practice is to tie great performance into the performance management process. A lot of people fear the end of the year review because they aren't sure what is coming. By having frequent and quality conversations, we ensure that employees are aware of what is going on. That way we celebrate having employees at the end of the year earning an A. The key is to develop a systematic process instead of an annual event.

How can leaders define a process for motivational strategies moving forward?

In partnering and coaching our employees, we must take the time to intimately get to know them — letting them know we care and continuously inquiring about their interests and well-being. The old saying, 'People want to know you care before they care how much you know' is so true. You should develop a series of courageous and compelling questions to help discern your workers' motivations. Some questions to ask include: What brings them energy and fulfillment? What do they strive for in a great working relationship? How do they learn successfully on the job? Where do they see themselves going in the future? How can we best support them? These are a sampling of the questions we need to ask over time to maintain motivational momentum. <<

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